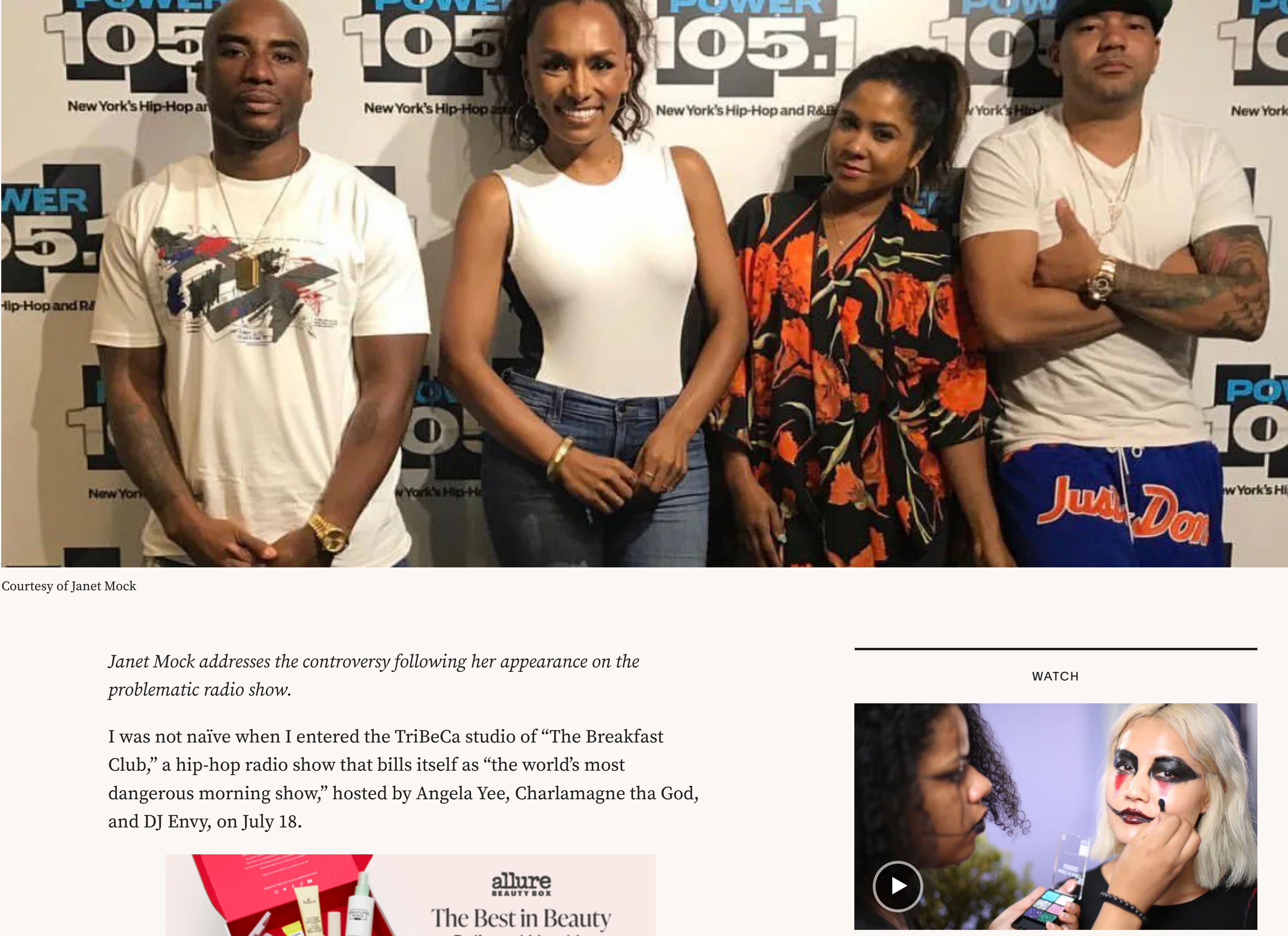


TRANSMISOGYNY

Dear Men of "The Breakfast Club": Trans Women Aren't a Prop, Ploy, or Sexual Predators

BY JANET MOCK
July 31, 2017



Courtesy of Janet Mock.

Janet Mock addresses the controversy following her appearance on the problematic radio show.

I was not naïve when I entered the TriBeCa studio of “The Breakfast Club,” a hip-hop radio show that bills itself as “the world’s most dangerous morning show,” hosted by Angela Yee, Charlamagne tha God, and DJ Envy, on July 18.



The Beauty Bible, Now in a Newsletter
Get the biggest beauty stories, launches, and trends of the day.

Your e-mail address

ENTER YOUR EMAIL

SIGN UP NOW

BY SIGNING UP, YOU AGREE TO OUR USER AGREEMENT AND PRIVACY POLICY & COOKIE STATEMENT.

Yet I was hopeful that I could use the show’s vast platform to speak directly to their predominantly black and Latinx listeners, who are often excluded from the conversations held in mainstream LGBT spaces (which are largely white, moneyed, and concerned with the centering of cis folk). I hoped I could make listeners aware of the lived realities of their trans sisters, and let them know that we deserve to be seen, heard, and acknowledged without the threat of harassment, exclusion, and violence.

My ultimate goal was to be accessible — to not judge, to call in rather than call out, and, above all, to exercise patience as the (straight cis male) hosts processed my existence. It’s rare that I do Trans 101 lecturing anymore, because I’ve already done that work with [my first book, Redefining Realness](#), which was filled with plain speak and explanatory commas about definitions, statistics, and context.

In fact, I’ve turned down thousands from colleges and corporations because I refuse to engage in Trans 101. Trans folk, especially of color, should not be obligated to help cis folk play catch-up on our experiences. The effort can detract from our work to protect and liberate ourselves. Yet I also know that black and Latina trans women often live in communities of color, so outreach to viewers of color, from [The Wendy Williams Show](#) and [Essence](#) to [Desus & Mero](#), was vital as I set out on my book tour.

I was invited to “The Breakfast Club” because cohost Yee chose my second memoir, [Surpassing Certainty](#), for her book club. It was my last scheduled media appearance after a long, grueling tour in support of [Surpassing Certainty](#), which is about the years in my life I decided to keep my trans-ness private — largely in order to gain access and maintain my safety. These years coincided with my 20s, when I navigated college, graduate school, and my early media career. The interview aired on radio stations across the country (edited and condensed) and in its entirety on [YouTube](#) a week later.

Though I have not been able to watch the video of my interview (I have already experienced it and won’t be doing so again), I’m proud of the labor I put forth, and I’m grateful to Yee for her preparation and effort to steer the conversation away from the particulars of my body and instead toward my work. The interview was what it was, and I refuse to re-experience being asked about my vagina in such blatant, irrelevant, and sensational ways. *Again, if I am not fucking you, why do you care?*

Just when I thought the experience was behind me, I woke up to a text from a friend a few days later (just after Trump’s attempt to [ban trans folk from the military](#)) asking if I was OK. I didn’t know what she was referring to — I was afraid something had happened to a mutual friend. My heart skipped.

Then I checked Twitter and saw a [video clip](#) of “The Breakfast Club” interview with comedian Lil Duval, whose name I hadn’t even heard before. In the clip (an extended version can be seen [here on TMZ](#)), DJ Envy poses a hypothetical question to his guest about dating and sleeping with a woman who discloses that she’s trans after four months of courtship.

“This might sound messed up and I don’t care,” Duval says. “She dying. I can’t deal with that.”

“That’s a hate crime,” Charlamagne says. “You can’t do that.”

“You manipulated me to believe in this thing,” Duval says, before continuing, “If one did that to me, and they didn’t tell me, I’mma be so mad I’d probably going to want to kill them.”

Then DJ Envy holds up my book [Surpassing Certainty](#). The cover image is a closeup portrait of my face. Envy says, “This is Janet Mock right here.”

“All right. Put that damn book down,” Duval demands.

“Tell me she ain’t pretty,” Charlamagne pushes. “Come on now.”

“She’s beautiful,” Yee echoes.

“Nope. That nigga doing his thing....ain’t finna get me.”

The hosts laugh after using my image as a literal prop — just days after I was a guest on the same show — for laughs, vitriol, and a deeper call and justification for violence. Just so we are all clear: On a black program that often advocates for the safety and lives of black people, its hosts laughed as their guest advocated for the murder of black trans women who are *black people, too!*

This was not the first time that I’ve been misgendered, dismissed, told that I am an abomination, that I need medical help and God, et cetera, et cetera. Boo boo: You are not original. Everything you’ve spewed has been said to me and my sisters before — hundreds of times. But there are deeper consequences to this casual ignorance.

It’s this deplorable rhetoric that leads many cis men, desperately clutching their heterosexuality, to yell at, kick, spit on, shoot, burn, stone, and kill trans women of color. It’s something I’ve [written about extensively](#) and even explored in [my conversation with actress Amiyah Scott](#), who lost her sister [Chyna Gibson](#) when she was shot to death in New Orleans in February. Chyna was the fifth trans woman killed in 2017. There have been at least 15 reported deaths of trans women of color so far this year, [according to GLAAD](#).

Until cis people — especially heteronormative men — are able to interrogate their own toxic masculinity and realize their own gender performance is literally killing trans women, cis men will continue to persecute trans women and [blame them for their own deaths](#). If you think trans women should disclose and “be honest,” then why don’t you work on making the damn world safe for us to exist in the first place? The “I’d kill a woman if I found out” rhetoric is precisely why so many women hold themselves so tight — the stigma and shame attached to our desires need to be abolished.

We must navigate difficult conversations about desire and identity, about the fact that trans girls exist, and for as long as we’ve existed we’ve been desired by men (including high-profile ones who won’t ever own their desires) who are not working toward gaining the tools to deal with their attraction. And just so we are clear: Just because you find me and my sisters attractive does not mean we desire you.

You never could.

Duval purposefully misgendered me (as the hosts laugh, thereby cosigning) in an attempt to put me in my place and erase my womanhood. Their fragile masculinity would not allow them to recognize a simple truth: I am an accomplished, beautiful black trans woman. Your willful ignorance will not stop me from being exactly who I am. My sisters and I are here and we exist, and you will not diminish our light and our brilliance.

Even in the face of this nonsense, I have to acknowledge that this is not about me. I’ve dealt with the limitations of little insecure men my entire life. I do thank each and every black woman and femme who’s shown up for me (especially Black Lives Matter cofounder Patrisse Cullors, trans feminist editor Ashlee Marie Preston, and activist Blossom C. Brown, who [disrupted](#) a Politicon conversation Sunday with cohost Charlamagne to call attention to the way his show helped perpetuate violence. Also, must shoutout Raquel Willis’s [#TransFolksAreNotAJoke](#)).

But I’ll be just fine: I have a job, a home, a supportive husband, and a family. I feel protected and cared for. I’m OK.

Unfortunately, my writing this essay or conducting another interview will not do all the work. It’ll be up to *you* — the readers and the listeners — to help bridge that gap. So I ask: How will you show up for our sisters who are watching, listening, and experiencing this violence daily?

Janet Mock is a writer, TV host, advocate, and former columnist for *Allure*, where her series, *Beauty Beyond Binaries*, explored identity, intersectionality, gender, trans representation, and beauty standards. Her bestselling memoir, *Redefining Realness*, told Janet’s inspiring story of growing up as a transgender girl, and her latest book,... [Read more](#)

Columnist and Contributor

Allure Daily Beauty Blast

Sign up for our daily send to get the latest beauty news and product launches.

SIGN UP NOW

By signing up, you agree to our [User Agreement](#) and [Privacy Policy & Cookie Statement](#).

Read More

THE MELANIN EDIT

Black Girl Gamers Band Together Against 2023’s Final Boss:...

Rethinking the stereotype of the solitary gamer.
BY SIERRA LEONE STARKS

HAIR

Chloe Bailey’s Hairstylist “Deserves Every Dime” for Thes...

Her hairstylist is going to kill it every single time.
BY GABI THORNE

HAIR

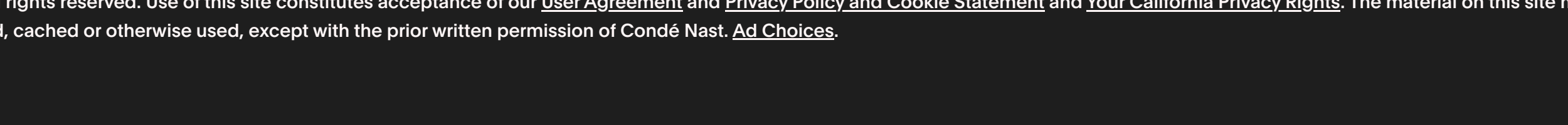
When Is Amazon Prime Day 2023? Here’s Everything You Need ...

Another big sale is happening soon.
BY SARAH HAN

HAIR

When I Say Saweetie Has the World’s Biggest Hair Accesso...

You’ve got to see her 2023 VMAs look from every angle.
BY GABI THORNE



allure

MORE FROM ALLURE THE BEAUTY EXPERT
ABOUT ALLURE NEWSLETTER SIGN UP
BEST OF BEAUTY AWARDS

CONTACT
CONTACT US
CAREERS

RSS FEEDS | ACCESSIBILITY HELP | CONDE NAST STORE | COOKIES SETTINGS

© 2023 Condé Nast. All rights reserved. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#) and [Privacy Policy](#) and [Cookie Statement](#) and [Your California Privacy Rights](#). The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of Condé Nast. [Ad Choices](#)